

Chapter 4



Strategies

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The Redevelopment District is well positioned to become the center of commercial and retail activities locally and regionally. The proposed redevelopment strategies thus aim to expand the market for a variety of activities while supporting the redevelopment goals. Perhaps the most important strategy for the District is to make the area a vibrant 18-hour neighborhood while creating opportunities for redevelopment. In order to expand the activity hours and enhance retail/entertainment opportunities, the market needs to be expanded. A larger market will then justify more evening and weekend hours of operation and the opening of additional residential and entertainment venues. To achieve this objective, several strategies are proposed in a number of areas. Strategies to stabilize the housing stock will strengthen the retail base. Efforts to improve the public realm will support the success of Downtown Highland retailers, etc.

The redevelopment strategy for the study area is built upon a seven cornerstone strategy. These cornerstone strategies are:

CORNERSTONE STRATEGIES

1. Build the Place
2. Create Great Public Spaces
3. Bring in the Arts
4. Put the Base In Place
5. Make It Happen With Partnerships
6. Leave the Car at Home
7. Mix It Up

1. Build the Place

The first cornerstone strategy is to rebuild the district by a mix of retail, office, and housing uses evoking a sense of place. This includes promoting innovative design concepts, encouraging high quality projects, and engaging public and open spaces, all of which build upon their proximity to the expressway and existing and future development opportunities.

- Redevelop Kennedy Avenue by encouraging a mix of active ground floor retail, office, and upper floors of housing uses, evoking a sense of place.
- Promote innovative design concepts throughout the study area.
- Promote adaptive reuse, infill, and redevelopment of underutilized sites and grounds including those owned by the town for a variety of uses and groups.



Examples of new, mixed-use buildings



Innovative art concept

2. Create Great Public Spaces

The second cornerstone strategy for redevelopment involves creation of quality public spaces in the district. This strategy will enhance Highland's image by cultivating a socially responsive effort to promote a sense of caring while creating a civic pride for the community.

- Create quality public spaces, such as corner plazas and end of block parks.
- Develop gateways at major entrances to the District.
- Create a highly designed center median and other improvements on Kennedy Avenue.
- Introduce well-designed amenities in the public realm improvements.
- Establish a wayfinding system for the District to direct visitors to attraction points.
- Create an active riverfront recreational complex with a variety of active and passive facilities.
- Require dedication of land (a minimum of 15%) for public purpose on all future redevelopment projects.

The Town's proposed Special Overlay District must require streetscaping to the extent possible to establish quality development and redevelopment of land along Kennedy Avenue, where setbacks and development patterns will result in a positive relationship to the street. The initial framework for all aesthetic improvements, public plazas and open space requirements will be steered by zoning regulations and design standards.



Examples of great public spaces

3. Bring In the Arts

Public art can also promote the sense of place and give the definition to the town. Strong art and cultural activities will further bring visitors to Downtown. To promote the arts as a cornerstone strategy for redevelopment, the following initiatives are recommended.

- Integrating art with the architectural, landscape, and infrastructure design of district projects, allowing for creative collaborations and strong aesthetic outcomes.
- Promote street art on all corner plazas as markers and places of rest.
- Create a strong and vibrant art and cultural organization for the town.
- Recruit artists facing relocation due to high real estate costs and other development pressures in Chicago and other places.
- Consider development of an art colony or establishment of an art incubator in the vacant Finke's building or another building.
- Incorporate public art projects in the CIP (Capital Improvement Program) process, so that projects can be identified at the earliest stages.
- Promote development of artist housing by providing incentives (i.e. small grants) for artist based residential developments.
- Create more display venues for local artists, utilizing vacant or underutilized space in Downtown for exhibits. Also, consider outdoor art in the parks as a means of promoting local talents in separate times of the year.
- Encourage excellence in the design of public buildings, parks, streets, and infrastructure. This means recognizing that public art — along with high-quality architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, graphic design and historic preservation — is an important tool in the Town's efforts to accomplish design excellence.
- Promote the Theater for its catalytic affects on the arts and culture. Promote shows that have varied cultural impact.
- Institute an "Arts in the Park" in the park program. Such program should support a variety of cultural activities ranging from music to outdoor shows for both parks in Downtown.
- Focus initially on projects with strongest placemaking impact. This means selecting places with high visibility and where people gather — downtown, corner plazas, gateways, parks and trails, should be considered as high priority locations for public art.



4. Put the Base in Place

The strengthening of the District's economic base through removal of the barriers and the installation of needed improvements will enhance opportunities, new development, employment, and social and economic growth. It will also expand the timeline for redevelopment. Recommended initiatives include:

- Remove barriers to higher density and mixed-use developments.
- Expand Redevelopment District boundaries to coincide with the Study Area. Establish area also as a Special Overlay District with extensive requirements for urban design features, landscaping and other public realm improvements.
- Target public improvements, facilities, utilities and new technologies in support of new developments.
- Assess establishment of a Special Economic Improvement District. Establish the Economic Improvement District if approved by property owners.
- Use smart growth principals for all redevelopments efforts as a matter of policy.



5. Make It Happen With Partnerships

A shared direction, along with a unified vision and purpose are essential for the district's redevelopment success. Expecting one entity to accomplish the task is totally unrealistic and will only result in "another Plan that sits on a shelf." Highland's future and the District's revitalization is too important to expect only one agency to take care of. The Plan requires the whole community and more for it to have a chance to succeed. No effort should be lost to expand partnerships at all levels. Such strategy will provide opportunities for participation by property owners, small business owners, other stakeholders, and a variety of governmental organizations.

- Create public/private partnerships with:
 - a. The City of Hammond as a major holder of land north of the Town.
 - b. Major business owners;
 - c. Downtown Business Association and other stakeholders.
 - d. NIRPC, in activities related to Little Calumet River;
 - e. Purdue University Calumet, to promote student visiting downtown;
 - f. RBA, to promote a transit line into Downtown particularly from Purdue University-Calumet;
 - g. Highland Citizens;
 - h. Private developers;
 - i. Local agencies identified as primary or supporting agencies.
 - j. Have regular meetings with the partners and inform them of the progress made in implementation.



6. Leave the Car at Home

Expansion of safe pedestrian, bicycle, and vehicular circulation in the District, in particular, public transit access and support will enhance viability of the district. Activities that support pedestrians and bicycle should be promoted to the extent possible.

- Strengthen alternative modes of transportation:
 - a. Seek funding for the establishment of a transit route through the RBA.
 - b. Expand bike routes on Kennedy Avenue for better linkage.
 - c. Promote construction of more pedestrian friendly sidewalks with amenities.
- Improve streets and public right-of-ways to create an attractive atmosphere.
- Enhance streets with ample wide sidewalks and landscaping to promote pedestrian and bike traffic.
- Improve crosswalks. Longitudinal “ladder” crosswalks should be provided to allow better visibility of the pedestrian crossing to motorists.
- Provide wider sidewalks in areas and curb bump-outs with bollards. This would reduce the distance for pedestrians to cross the street and improve visibility of and for pedestrians.



7. Mix It Up

Mixed-use developments bring vitality to an area as well as making development more affordable, particularly for residential uses. This strategy will aim to work with developers to create a catalyst for mixed-use, mixed-income products along Kennedy Avenue and in Downtown.

- Revise Zoning Ordinance and other codes to allow mixed-use developments.
- Promote construction of higher density developments in the District.



